

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE.

Our Country's Shells, and how to know them. A Guide to the British Mollusca. By W. J. GORDON. With a Coloured Illustration of every Species and many Original Diagrams by A. LAMBERT. London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, & Co. 8vo. Pp. 152; 33 Plates. Price 6s.

As stated in the Introduction, "this book is intended as an introductory working manual for the collector, the object of its analytical tables being to enable him to name any specimen in the British list." The question is, does the work fulfil this object? In many instances certainly not, the illustrations being so crude that we do not get even a faint idea of the species supposed to be delineated. The figures of some of the larger bivalves, as might be expected, are fairly characteristic, but the smaller forms are less successful. Turning to the univalves, where accurate drawing and perspective are necessary, we meet with very many hopeless failures—in fact, such caricatures, that we are surprised the artist (!) should have permitted his name to appear.

Turning to the text, we candidly confess we do not like the method of it. In the first place, the descriptions are very superficial and insufficient. As an example reference should be made to the paragraph upon Brachiopods (p. 41) and the characters which are supposed to differentiate the genera. The reader, unless he has an idea of what a Brachiopod is like, will certainly not gain that knowledge from this work. Some of the descriptions are very remarkable: for instance, *Capulus* is said to be "a stout, sturdy, independent sort of a shell." What does it mean? "*Tectura* is like the roof of a house, *Helcion* like a lady's bonnet"!

Referring to the tabular scheme, we find it very difficult to make use of it, and much time might be wasted in trying to identify a shell by it. The nomenclature employed is absurdly antiquated, and it is quite time that the names used by Gwyn Jeffreys were discarded. For example, under *Pleurotoma* are ranged fourteen species, which, according to modern accepted ideas, should be placed in six genera; and under *Mangilia*, also belonging to the *Pleurotomidae*, seven species occur which belong to three different genera, not one of them being a true *Mangilia*. One or two other examples will be sufficient. On p. 119, under *Fusus*, of which the British Isles do not produce a single species, nine species are ranged, which, according to modern nomenclature, should be placed in five distinct genera. The British *Chitonidae* also should be ranged under six genera, instead of *Chiton* only, which is not represented in the British fauna. As a picture-book this work is more or less a failure, and as a descriptive account it is often too brief and very puzzling in its arrangement. But perhaps we expect too much at the price.